

Policy for Appropriate Home Sharps Disposal

Town of Bedford, Massachusetts

Board of Health

Purpose

To provide for the safety and health of employees and the general public in the Town of Bedford through safe and appropriate collection and disposal of home medical sharps, such as hypodermic needles, syringes and lancets, used for diabetes testing and treatment and management of other medical conditions, for both people and pets.

Policy

This Policy is written to reflect Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 111, section 31 “that boards of health may make reasonable health regulations” and 105 CMR 480.000 which sets forth requirements for the storage, treatment, disposal and transportation of medical or biological waste. In 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Public Health Council (DPH/PHC) approved amendments to the state’s medical waste regulations which include a ban on the disposal of sharps in household trash, effective July 1, 2012.

Regulation 105 CMR 480.000 was put forth to regulate the storage and disposal of infectious or physically dangerous medical or biological waste. This regulation was amended in 2008 to include a ban on the disposal of sharps in household waste effective date of implementation July 1, 2012. Regulatory changes made were to reduce injuries that could occur as a result of improper disposal of needles and other sharps. People exposed to spent needles and sharps face the possibility of a painful injury and the risk of contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B. All needlestick injuries must be treated as if the needle were infected with a disease, leading to the cost of medical testing and treatment and anxiety for the injured person.

Definitions

Biohazard: Any biological material that is harmful, or potentially harmful to man, other species, or the environment.

Board of Health: The Town of Bedford Board of Health

Contaminated sharps: The presence or the reasonably expected presence of blood or other potentially infectious materials on a sharp item or surface. All spent or used sharps are considered contaminated.

Exposure incident and/or puncture wounds: Specifically eye, mouth, other mucous membrane or non-intact skin exposure or a puncture wound which damages skin or blood vessels which allows contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials including needles or sharps

Home sharps (HS): All spent non-commercially generated hypodermic needles, syringes and lancets that have been used or are not in their original, intact and sealed packaging, and that result from personal use or from pets at a residence or outside the home. Any syringe and needle combination is considered a sharp and the needle should never be separated from the syringe, but should be discarded as a single unit. The term Home Sharps, does not include needles or lancets generated by home health aides, visiting nurses or any other professional person providing a service within the private residence.

Incinerate/Incineration: The controlled flame combustion of materials in an enclosed system to thermally break down the solid waste and render the waste non-infectious.

Medical or Biological Waste: Waste materials that pose a danger of infection if disposed of improperly, or which may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality, serious irreversible or incapacitating reversible illness, or may present a potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, disposed of or otherwise managed. The following types of waste are identified as medical or biological waste:

- **Blood and blood products:** Discarded bulk human blood and blood products in free draining liquid state; body fluids contaminated with visible blood; materials saturated/dripping with blood. Blood and blood products do not include feminine hygiene products.
- **Sharps:** discarded medical articles that may cause puncture or cuts, including but not limited to, all needles, syringes, lancets, pen needles, Pasteur pipettes, broken medical glassware/plasticware, scalpel blades, suture needles, dental wires and disposable razors used in connection with a medical procedure.
- **Medical Waste Tracking Form:** A paper or electronic form approved by the department that provides confirmation to a generator of receipt of medical or biological waste by an off-site treatment facility

Sharps Collection Center: An identified site within the community established for the sole purpose of collecting home sharps pursuant to M.G.L. 94c, §27A.

Sharps Collection by Mail: A prepaid service provided by several commercial entities whereby the consumer purchases a sharps container and mailing system that includes everything needed to collect sharps and other used healthcare materials for proper

treatment and repurposing, that includes a web-based tracking and reporting program that certifies the transportation and treatment of returned materials.

Sharps Container: A leak proof, rigid, puncture resistant, shatterproof container, usually red or orange which carries a biohazard symbol on the outside.

Spent: Having been used and unable to be used again

Treatment Facility: The off-site facility where medical or biological waste is rendered non-infectious prior to disposal as solid waste, in accordance with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection regulations.

Waste Generator: Any person, corporation, partnership, trust, association, society, organized group of persons, body politic and corporate, public agency, authority, department, office and political subdivision of the Commonwealth, that generates medical or biological waste except home sharps and other waste generated by residents in private dwellings. The term "waste generator" shall include but not be limited to hospitals, long-term care facilities, laboratories, clinics, physicians' and dentists' offices, schools, veterinarians, funeral homes, body piercing and body art facilities, trauma scene responders, and home health agencies providing services in public dwellings.

Procedure

Effective July 1, 2012, home sharps, as well as unopened packages of hypodermic needles and lancets, shall not be disposed of in solid municipal waste, including household waste, and shall be disposed of in accordance with 105 CMR 480.125(B)

In accordance with M.G.L. 94c, §27A, the following community programs are established in Bedford, MA:

1. Collection and disposal of home sharps
 - a. Collection events will occur at least biannually at planned, publicized events.
 - b. Home sharps will only be accepted in almost full, approved sharps containers.
 - c. Approved sharps containers can be purchased from various local retailers, pharmacies and on-line. The Bedford Board of Health website will provide information on where sharps containers can be purchased.
 - d. The Bedford Board of Health will contract with a licensed vendor for proper disposal (i.e. incineration) of collected home sharps.

2. Mail back services for home sharps are available for a fee. Information on these services are available on the Bedford Board of health website at www.bedford.ma.gov/health.

Training Plan

The Bedford Board of Health will provide educational materials for the Town of Bedford residents through the use of Bedford TV (community access television), local newspapers, the Board of Health website, radio announcements and written educational materials available at community sites throughout the Town.

Education will be provided to First Responders, physician offices, health care centers and area hospitals regarding the program.

Scheduled Home Sharps Collection Events will be posted on the Bedford Board of Health website, the Town of Bedford website, in the local newspapers and on in the community calendar on the Bedford TV website.

Posters and signage will be distributed throughout the town, close to the date of the event directing Bedford Residents to the Sharps Collection Center